

SUBVERSIVE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE *NEPO-BABY* PHENOMENON IN ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT: JOB SATISFACTION, EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

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Purpose: The purpose of the study was to identify the negative consequences of the *nepo-baby* phenomenon in management by verifying the level of job satisfaction and the level of employee well-being among employees of SME companies in Poland.

Design/methodology/approach: The article is based on an empirical study using questionnaires to measure job satisfaction (MSQ) and to measure well-being (PWBS) among a study and a control group and their detailed statistical analysis. The topic area includes human resource management and work psychology.

Findings: The article presents the context of the negative effects of the *nepo-baby* phenomenon and shows that job satisfaction and well-being of employees are significantly lower in companies where respondents declared the phenomenon of *nepo-baby* than in those where it was not declared. The results are a starting point for further analysis of the effects of nepo-baby in organizational management.

Research limitations/implications: The study focused on the Polish SME sector in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, so the results may be specific to this sector, and the sample was relatively small, which is the kind of limitation that makes the research conducted exploratory and preliminary. In the future, it is necessary to conduct a longitudinal study on a larger sample.

Practical implications: The results show that employees working in a *nepo-baby* environment have low job satisfaction and their wellbeing is also low. This shows that this phenomenon is not conducive to the development of the company and that it can be crucial. This research may lead to specific solutions to counteract the negative effects of the phenomenon. It is important to start by raising awareness that the company should be managed by qualified people and not by people with family connections, as this is detrimental to the company.

Originality/value: This is the first article to present the *nepo-baby* phenomenon directly and a study that examines employee job satisfaction and well-being in organizations where this phenomenon occurs.

Keywords: *nepo-baby*, management, negative consequences, job satisfaction, employee well-being.

Category of the paper: empirical and scientific research.

1. Introduction

Nepotism is a ubiquitous phenomenon, and while there have been many publications on it and it is generally a phenomenon eagerly addressed by various fields of study, the *nepo-baby* phenomenon itself is a relatively new concept in science. It is most often encountered in the literature as a term for the children of celebrities who, either through fame or their parents' achievements, become famous and wealthy themselves (Jones, 2023). Special attention was paid to the children of music celebrities, where it was investigated whether *nepo-babys* entered the music industry out of passion or rather out of a desire to take advantage of an easy money-making opportunity (Maziriri et al., 2024). And a recent article addressing the phenomenon juxtaposes it with meritocracy and asks respondents how they perceive the success and causes of *nepo-babys* in Hollywood (Foster, Maroto, 2025).

And while the focus on this phenomenon in the influencer, film, music or just celebrity-related industries in general is high (Becsek, 2025) it is in the context of organizational management that little is yet known about it and there are very few publications in this area (Foster, Maroto, 2025). And since nepotism in itself is a mechanism significantly affecting the fate of the enterprise, it can be assumed that the phenomenon of *nepo-baby* in management, which is, as it were, a detailed distinction of it, also significantly affects the dynamics and organizational culture of the enterprise. Including already on the basis of existing literature, it can be surmised that job satisfaction of employees who are managed by *nepo-babys* may be inadequate (Rasheed et al., 2025) and that employee well-being company where nepotism is present may be significantly worse than those where it is not (Lasisi et al., 2022). Given these statements, it seems reasonable to specifically examine the *nepo-baby* phenomenon's impact on these two factors among workers.

2. Importance of the *Nepo-baby* phenomenon in management

The *nepo-baby* phenomenon originates from the discourse treating celebrities and when it comes to presenting a definition of this phenomenon this must be the starting point. In the simplest terms, they are defined beginning with *nepo-babys* as the children of celebrities who are famous for the sake of their also famous parents. An example of such a person is *Hailey Bieber*, who is the daughter of *Stephen Baldwin*, a well-known American actor who starred in, among other things, *The Flintstones* (Jones, 2023). And while the definition of nepotism per se is even intuitively clear to everyone, it needs to be demarcated in some way from *nepo-babys* (Maziriri et al., 2024). *Nepo-baby* refers exclusively to people born into influential families and

can refer to a variety of industries who, by virtue of their origin, have better opportunities and are treated professionally in a favourable manner (Maziriri et al., 2024; cf. Crump, 2022).

However, this phenomenon does not only occur in relation to the world of celebrity, but also in politics and, above all what interests us from the point of view of this article, in management. And despite the fact that there are few publications specifically on the topic of *nepo-baby* in management, the phenomenon of nepotism itself is widespread in small and medium-sized enterprises. On this basis, it can also be surmised that the *nepo-baby* construct itself is also widespread and thus of considerable importance in the context of the course of the company's processes (Schilpzand et al.; cf. Perez-Alvarez, Strulik, 2021).

In the most general terms, it can be said that a *nepo-baby* is a person whose career path develops due to family connections usually in the same industry as the parent or parents, with particular consequences in terms of inequality in access to managerial positions (Foster, Maroto, 2025). This also includes people who start their careers in companies owned by their parents (Staiger, 2023) and heirs of these companies (Maziriri et al., 2024). This is because there, without qualifications and the necessary experience, they can hold high positions such as board member, president, director or manager just for the sake of being the son or daughter of influential people. According to another distinction, *nepo-babies* are those who, by virtue of their influential parents, have easier access to resources (Staiger, 2023) as well as persons benefiting from family ties (Padgett et al., 2015). In other words, such people have much higher opportunities than those who do not have such family connections and often, despite a lot of ability, effort, toil or qualifications, will never have the chance to match the *nepo-babys*. Furthermore, *nepo-babys* often do not seek to develop their skills or qualifications because they do not need them and their background alone guarantees them career success. One can also encounter opinions that if it were not for a certain kind of personal charm or effort on the part of the *nepo-babys*, they would not have had professional success, however, such an opinion appears mainly among themselves (Foster, Maroto, 2025). It should be noted that this distinction is very preliminary for this phenomenon, as the concept of *nepo-baby* is new in management and it should be assumed that it will expand over time. It is extremely important to be aware that in this case there is a clear conceptual immersion, i.e. *nepo-baby* itself can be treated as a substructure of nepotism, but at the same time it can be considered separately. Due to this fact, it is impossible to completely separate this concept from nepotism, as it derives from it.

In addition, it is also recognised that *nepo-babys* are also people who, despite the fact that they are apparently trying to shape their career, it is controlled by their parents, or they are more easily accepted in other companies for the sake of their influential parents. This means that even if people who are children of influential parents want to develop their careers on their own, their parents often extend an invisible protection over them that makes everything come more easily, or other people facilitate this path for them because they want to buy into their parents' favour. *Nepo-baby* refers exclusively to people born into influential families and can refer to

a variety of industries who, by virtue of their origin, have better opportunities and are treated professionally in a favourable manner (Staiger, 2023). One can also encounter the term *nepo-baby* for people who are not the children of influential parents but, for example, their relatives (Foster, Maroto, 2025). Due to the multiplicity of meanings, a complex distinction of this phenomenon in management has been developed on the basis of literature (Figure 1), which is presented below.

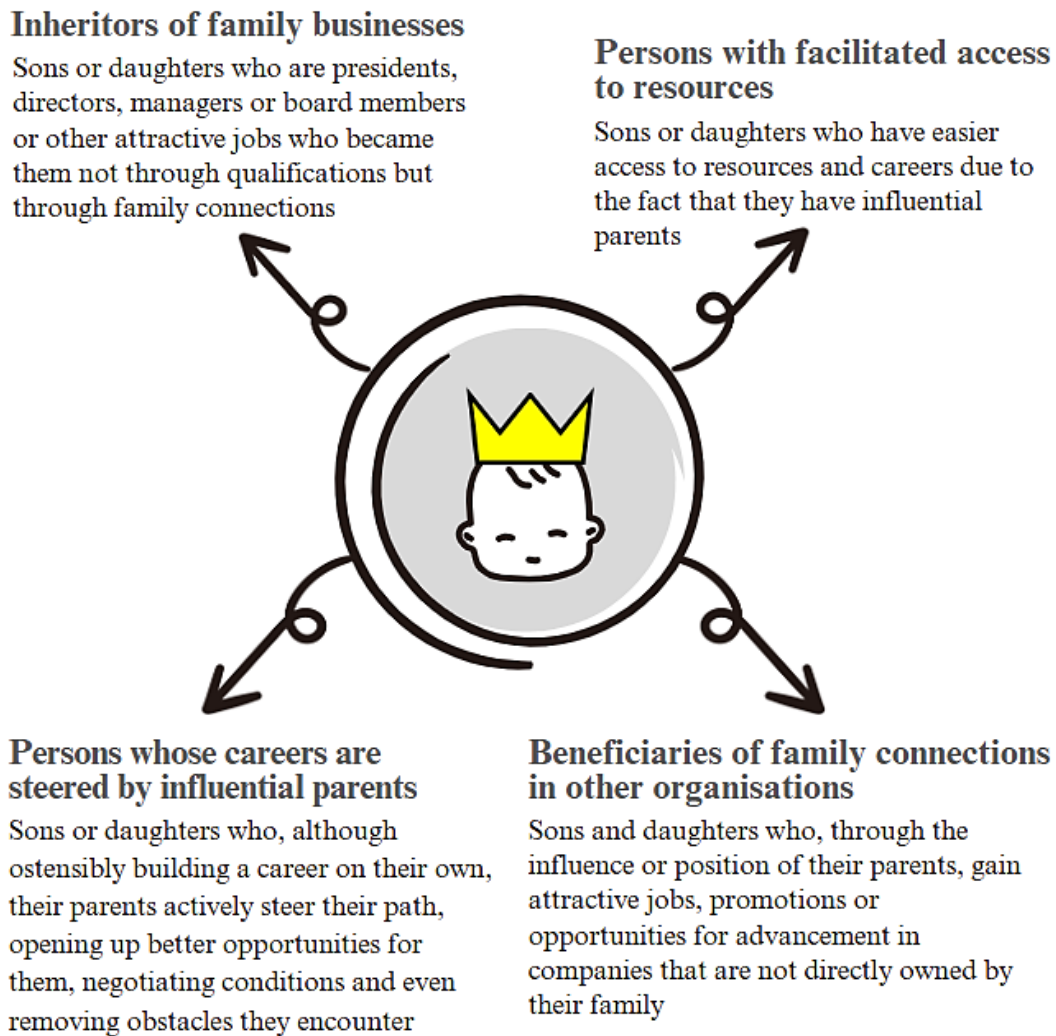


Figure 1. Complex distinction of *nepo-baby* in management.

Source: own elaboration

This distinction between types of *nepo-babies* is important because the phenomenon functions differently depending on the context in which it occurs and how it is initiated. For this reason, such an outline will allow for a better understanding of the forms this phenomenon can take.

3. Subversive repercussions of the *nepo-baby* phenomenon

The *nepo-baby* phenomenon, like nepotism, has a number of negative consequences for the company. Wypych-Dobkowska in the context of nepotism distinguishes three areas that encompass its negative consequences. The first level she distinguishes is the individual level. Wypych-Dobkowska in the context of nepotism distinguishes three areas that encompass its negative consequences. The first level she distinguishes is the individual level. The second area that stands out is that of team consequences, where nepotism leads to exacerbated conflicts and communication problems among the workforce. And the last dimension affected by nepotism is the organizational consequences. This leads to increased absenteeism and employee turnover. The quality of work and productivity decreases, which also leads to a worsening of the company's financial situation and image problems (Wypych-Dobkowska, 2010).

Given that *nepo-baby* is semantically embedded in nepotism itself, based on the literature available on the general phenomenon of nepotism, it can be assumed that the phenomenon of *nepo-baby* has similar effects. One of these is a decline in trust in institutions or superiors. (Becsek, 2025). Another issue is the fact that the phenomenon of nepotism carries the risk of interpersonal conflicts within the team, which significantly reduces not only morale but also employee efficiency (Akar, 2020). This undermines employees' belief in their own agency and in the fact that they can achieve something through hard work. In addition, it leads to employees resorting to dirty tricks, intrigue and manipulation in order to get promoted, or engaging in personal relationships with their superiors in order to achieve promotion or benefits. This has consequences for the organizational culture (Schilpzand, 2025).

In addition, the literature shows that the *nepo-baby* can disrupt organisational effectiveness and lead to a decrease in productivity and motivation among employees (Şeker, Karadayı, 2024). This phenomenon also leads to a lowering of ethical values and results in low employee morale. Because they feel that they have no chance of real promotion in such a structure and that there is no justice in this type of arrangement. In such a company, the rules of appraisal and promotion are diluted as a result of which employees learn that incompetence and close relationships and family connections are more important than real performance (Akar, 2020). In addition, this phenomenon exacerbates workplace inequalities and perpetuates elite structures (Foster, Maroto, 2025). It also results in talented employees being demotivated and more likely to leave the organisation due to impeded access to real promotion (Staiger, 2023). Unfortunately, most of the implications of this in the literature appear to be negative as shown below (Figure 2) on a six-arm model.

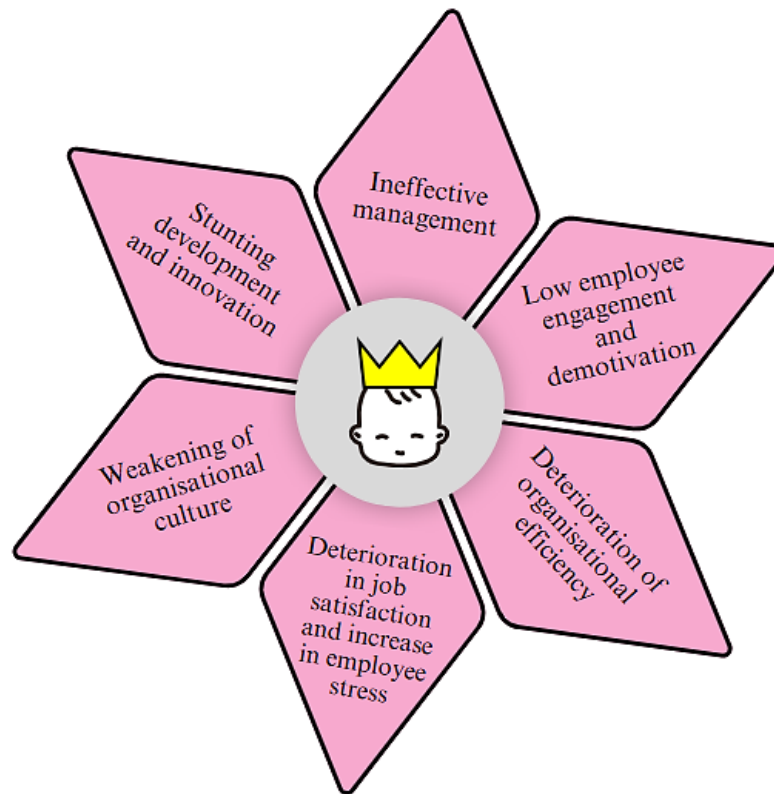


Figure 2. Six-arm model of negative *nepo-baby* effects in management.

Source: own elaboration.

In addition to this, the literature mentions that nepotism negatively affects employees' job satisfaction (Rasheed et al., 2025) and the very assumption that *nepo-baby* may lead to precisely this reduced job satisfaction of his subordinates (Lasisi et al, 2022). It is also a not insignificant phenomenon in terms of employee wellbeing. Indeed, research has already been carried out on the negative impact of nepotism on employee well-being hence it is highly likely that management specifically by *nepo-babies* also creates specific working conditions for employees (Lasisi et al., 2022). And this leads directly to the following hypotheses:

1. *In organizations where nepo-babies manage, job satisfaction of subordinates is low.*
2. *In organizations where nepo-babies manage the wellbeing of subordinates is at a low level.*

The conclusion is the literature provides premises leading to such assumptions. And their empirical testing may prove relevant to the definition of corporate management strategies and may lead to a broader discourse in this area. Particularly as the *nepo-baby* phenomenon in management is not yet widely exposed, it certainly has some impact on organizations and the human resources present.

4. Methodology

Two specialised questionnaires measuring well-being and measuring employee satisfaction were used for the study. It was an abridged version of MSQ (*Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire*) and an abridged version PWBS (*Psychological Well-Being Scales*) and were used in a research group comprising companies where the *nepo-baby* phenomenon occurred and in a control group where this phenomenon was not declared by respondents. The MSQ measures job satisfaction, with a Cronbach's α ranging from 0.84 to 0.92, indicating very good reliability. It consists of 20 questions where respondents answer using a five-point scale (Kukla et al, 2024). The PWBS, on the other hand, measures wellbeing and has a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.79 - 0.93, which also indicates very good reliability (Karaś, Ciecuch, 2019). Both questionnaires have been adapted to Polish conditions and meet norms and standardization (Kukla et al, 2024; Karaś, Ciecuch, 2019). They can be used to measure individual subscales of these dimensions such as wellbeing or employee satisfaction however, the focus of this study is on the overall score i.e. the overall wellbeing score and the overall score and their juxtaposition and statistical analysis of both groups.

The survey procedures were preceded by the fact that groups were differentiated by filling in an initial metric declaring group membership based on observations of the occurrence of the *nepo-baby* phenomenon. The *nepo-baby* variable itself is a *quasi-independent* variable because it was a study with naturally occurring groups. The dependent variables in this study were wellbeing and job satisfaction. Prior to completing the questionnaires, the definition of *nepo-baby* was carefully explained to the study participants so that they could indicate which study group they belonged to. A total of 50 people took part in the study (half of the study group and the control group respectively) who were both male and female representatives of different jobs with different material status; however, these parameters were not controlled and were not taken into account. It is also worth noting that the companies came from the SME sector and were located in the Świętokrzyskie voivodeship.

5. Research results

The collected data from the empirical study were statistically analysed using the program *Jamovi*. A summary of the results of the job satisfaction variable (*MSQ*) and the employee wellbeing variable (*PWBS*) is presented below (figure 3-6).

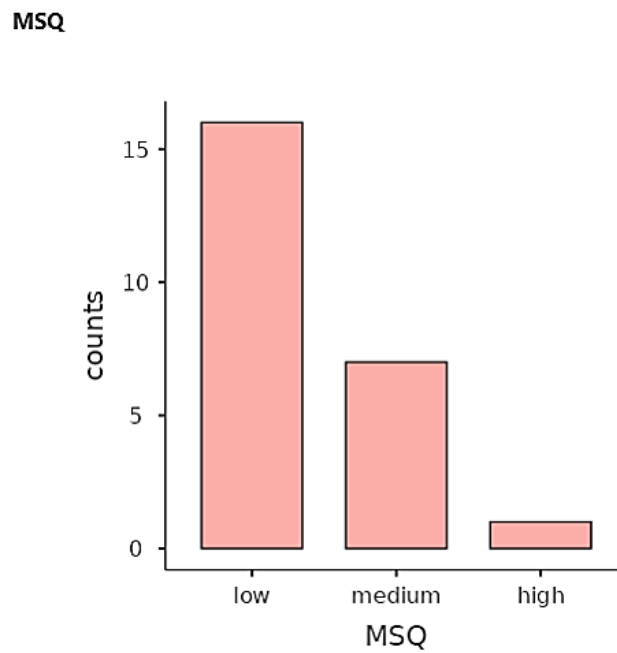


Figure 3. Summary of MSQ results for the study group.

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

As can be seen in the figure 3 among the people in the research group, i.e. those in which the *nepo-baby* phenomenon occurred in the organisation, the level of job satisfaction was predominantly low.

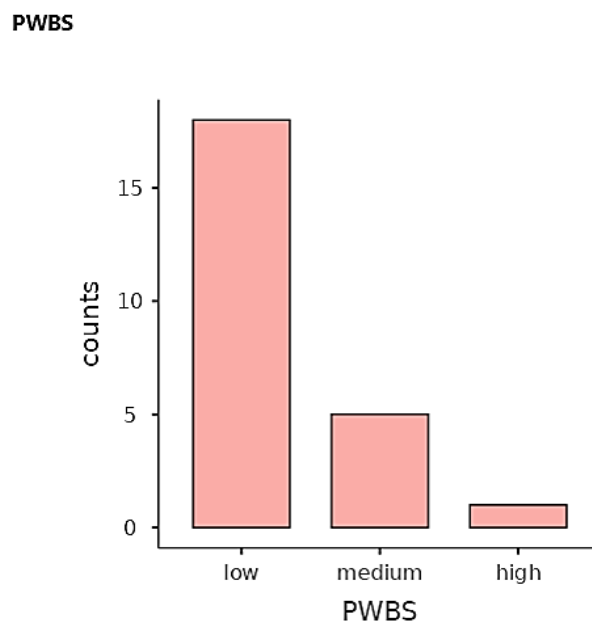


Figure 4. Summary of PWBS results for the study group.

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

The same was true for the level of well-being (figure 4), which was also predominantly low in the study group.

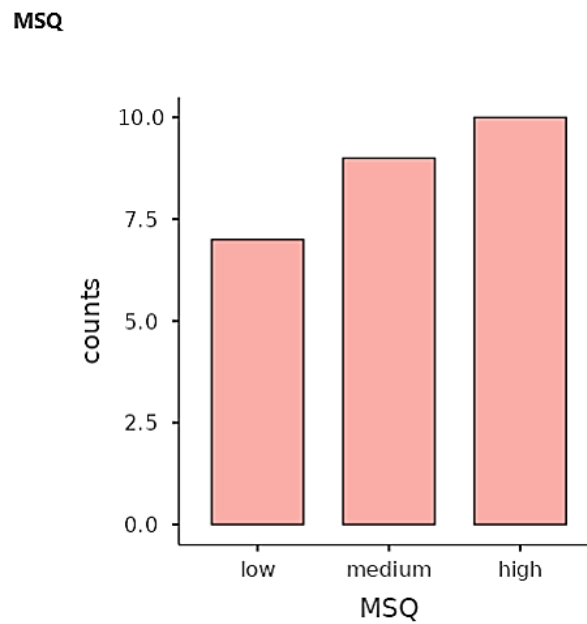


Figure 5. Summary of MSQ results for the control group.

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

In the control group, i.e. the group in which respondents did not declare the occurrence of the *nepo-baby* phenomenon, the tendency in the case of job satisfaction was the opposite (figure 5) there were more people who manifested an average or high level and the differences between respondents were not so pronounced.

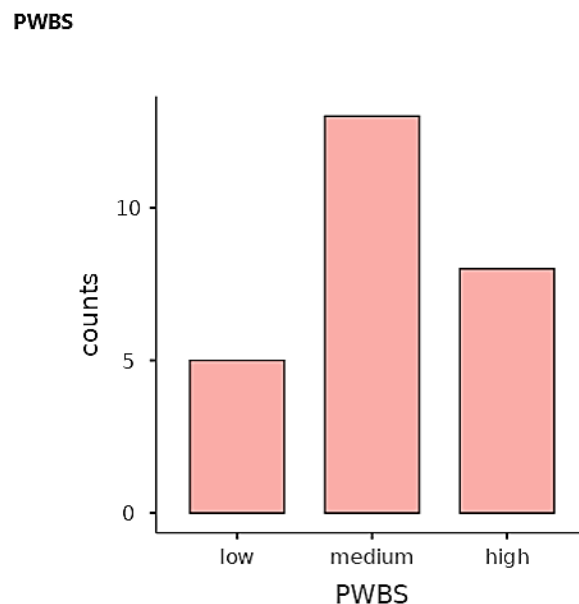


Figure 6. Summary of PWBS results for the control group.

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

In contrast, for well-being in the control group, most scores were at the medium level (figure 6) and there was more of an upward trend. From these charts alone, it can be assumed that the hypotheses formulated were quite correct. However, to be sure whether these results supported the hypotheses and provide a valid rationale for further analysis, they need to be

analysed in more detail. For this purpose, with the help of the statistical programme z, the results obtained were analysed using the χ^2 test of independence including contingency and frequency. This was necessary not only to better visualise the data but also to verify the statistical significance of the results obtained. The purpose of using the chi-square test is to test whether the distribution of responses in terms of MSQ and PWBS levels is statistically significantly different between the study group and the control group. Frequencies have been used below to organise and summarise the data (Table 1).

Table 1.
Cumulative frequency

MSQ frequencies for the study group				MSQ frequencies for the control group			
MSQ	Frequency	% total	% cumulative	MSQ	Frequency	% total	% cumulative
low	16	66.7%	66.7%	low	7	26.9%	26.9%
medium	7	29.2%	95.8%	medium	9	34.6%	61.5%
high	1	4.2%	100.0%	high	10	38.5%	100.0%
PWBS frequencies for the study group				PWBS frequencies for the control group			
PWBS	Frequency	% total	% cumulative	PWBS	Frequency	% total	% cumulative
low	18	75.0%	75%	low	5	19.2%	19.2%
medium	5	20.8%	95.8%	medium	13	50%	69.2%
high	1	4.2%	100%	high	8	30.8%	100.0%

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

Based on the frequency, it can be concluded that as many as 66.7% of the people in the study group declared a low level of job satisfaction and only 4.2% a high level of satisfaction. When it comes to the control group, the distribution is quite different, namely only 27.3% of people had a low level of job satisfaction and 40% a high one. Preliminarily, based on this table, it can be concluded that the research group has a low level of job satisfaction. Another key observation is that one can already see differences in job satisfaction between the research group and the control group in terms of job satisfaction at this stage. With regard to the second variable concerning the level of wellbeing, up to 75.0 % of people in the study group manifested a low level of wellbeing, which shows a clear trend in this group. In the control group, on the other hand, the distribution of wellbeing levels varies, with most people displaying average levels of wellbeing. For this variable, differences can also be observed between the study group and the control group already at this stage of the analyses. It is apparent that for both the MSQ and PWBS variable that the study group tends to have lower levels of both job satisfaction and wellbeing compared to the control group. This provides an important basis on which to analyse the data more closely using cross-tabulation (Table 2) and to finally apply a chi-square analysis (Table 3) to confirm statistical significance.

Table 2.*Cross tabulations for MSQ and PWBS variables in both groups*

		MSQ			
group		low	medium	high	totality
Research group	observed	16	7	1	24
	expected	10.8	7.84	5.39	24.0
	% in the line	66.7%	29.2%	4.2%	100%
	% in the column	72.7%	43.8%	9.1%	49.0%
Control group	observed	6	9	10	25
	expected	11.2	8.16	5.61	25.0
	% in the line	24.0%	36.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	% in the column	27.3%	56.3%	90.9%	51.0%
totality	observed	22	16	11	49
	expected	22	16	11	49
	% in the line	44.9%	32.7%	22.4%	100.0%
	% in the column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		PWBS			
group		low	medium	high	totality
Research group	observed	18	5	1	24
	expected	11.0	8.64	4.32	24.0
	% in the line	75.0%	20.8%	4.2%	100.0%
	% in the column	78.3%	27.8%	11.1%	48.0%
Control group	observed	5	13	8	26
	expected	12.0	9.36	4.68	26.0
	% in the line	19.2%	50.0%	30.8%	100.0%
	% in the column	21.7%	72.2%	88.9%	52.0%
totality	observed	23	18	9	50
	expected	23	18	9	50
	% in the line	46.0%	36.0%	18.0%	100.0%
	% in the column	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

The cross-tabulation in the case of the *MSQ* Descriptive leads to the following conclusion: the research group has a clearly different structure of job satisfaction than the control group. The control group showed a higher level of satisfaction much more often than the research group. For the second *PWBS* variable, the descriptive conclusion is analogous. In this case, the research group has a clearly lower level of well-being than the control group. Looking a little more closely at the cross-tabulation, it is also possible to see some disparity between the frequently observed and expected bones in the individual cells, which indicates the existence of a relationship. For example, in the study group, 16 people were observed with a low level from work while the expected number was only 10.8. in the control group, on the other hand, only 6 people were observed with a low *MSQ* while 11.2 were expected. The difference between 16 and 6 observed with the expected 10.8 vs. 11.2 respectively is a strong indicator that low levels of satisfaction at work may be statistically significant. The over-representation of those with low levels of job satisfaction and under-representation of those with high levels compared to what would be expected in the study group is reinforced by the opposite trend seen in the control group. Interesting observations can also be made in the case of the second *PWBS* variable, where as many as 18 people with low wellbeing were observed, while only 12.0 were expected, i.e. six more people than theoretically expected. In the control group for wellbeing,

only 5 people were observed with this result with an expected value of 12.0. There is a huge disparity here (18 vs 5 with an expectation of 12.0 vs 12.0). The study group is characterised by an excessively high number of people with low well-being. If the variables were not dependent to some extent on each other such results would be impossible. However, a chi-square test verification is also required to be certain (Table 3, figure 6, figure 7), which is detailed below.

Table 3.

Results of the chi-square test of independence for MSQ and PWBS levels in the study and control groups

Tests χ^2 MSQ				Nominal MSQ	
	value	df	p		value
χ^2	12.1	2	0.002	Phi	NaN
N	49			V Cramera	0.498
Tests χ^2 PWBS				Nominal PWBS	
	value	df	p		value
χ^2	16.3	2	< .001	Phi	NaN
N	50			V Cramera	0.571

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

The results of the chi-square test showed a statistically significant relationship between group membership and job satisfaction (MSQ), as indicated by the value obtained: $\chi^2 = 12.1$ with 2 degrees of freedom (df). What is important is the observed value of $p < 0.05$, which means that the differences in job satisfaction between the study group and the control group are so large that they cannot be random. In addition, Cramér's V clearly indicates a moderately strong relationship. This shows that the research group, i.e. the one in which the participants declared the occurrence of *nepo-baby* in management in their organisation, has a much lower level of job satisfaction than those in which this phenomenon does not occur. As regards the results for the second variable concerning the level of well-being (PWBS), the *chi-square* test showed an even higher statistical correlation with group membership. With two degrees of freedom (df), the value $\chi^2 = 16.3$, and $p < 0.001$, which shows that there is a very low probability of obtaining such results by chance. Cramér's V indicates a strong connection between them. Based on this, it can be seen that belonging to a group is linked to the level of well-being. And considering both variables, both job satisfaction and well-being depend on whether or not the phenomenon of organisation occurs. Thus, the hypotheses were confirmed. Additionally, bar charts are provided below to visualise the observed distributions and differences between the groups (figure 7, figure 8).

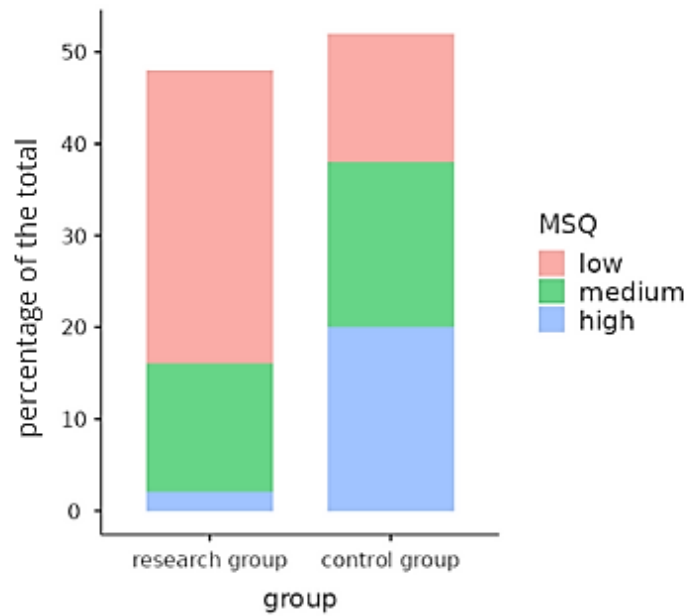


Figure 7. Summary of the results of the *Chi-square* test for MSQ.

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

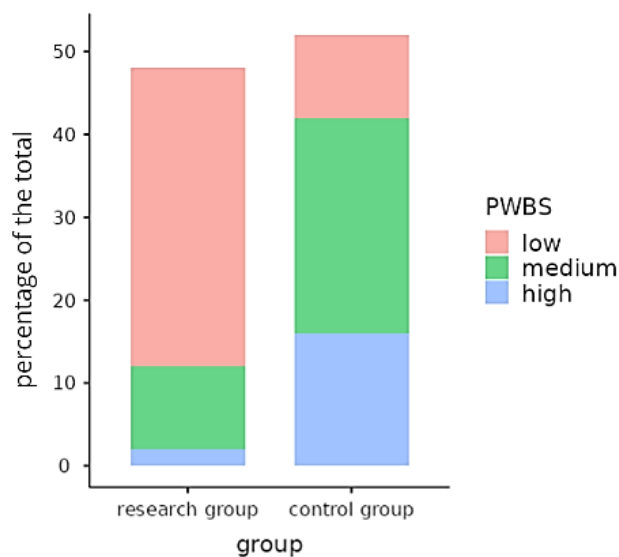


Figure 8. Summary of the results of the Chi-square independence test for the PWBS.

Source: own elaboration based on *Jamovi*.

Figures 7 and 8 show that the distribution in the statistical sense depends on the group, as was also demonstrated in detail earlier.

6. Discussion

As a result of the research conducted in this article on job satisfaction and employee well-being, firms where the *nepo-baby* phenomenon occurs reveal some specific observations on this topic. Both the level of well-being and the level of job satisfaction in organizations where this phenomenon occurs show a downward trend. In organizations where respondents did not report this phenomenon, job satisfaction and well-being levels among employees were significantly higher than in those where it did occur. This means that based on this study it can be assumed that the *nepo-baby* phenomenon has a negative impact on employees. The literature on the subject provides evidence suggesting that *nepo-baby* leads to negative consequences for organizations at both the individual and overall levels. Despite the small sample size, the results of the study were statistically significant, and on this basis it can be assumed with a high degree of probability that such a trend exists in management.

According to the literature on the subject, the *nepo-baby* phenomenon tends to have negative effects in organizations regardless of the industry (Foster, Maroto, 2025). Also, when we read about the general mechanism of nepotism, there are many publications on this subject which mention that it has a negative impact not only on management itself, but also holistically on the entire company (Akar, 2020). Importantly, in the context of this research, there are references in the literature not only to the fact that nepotism can have a negative impact on employee well-being (Lasisi et al., 2022) but also a reference to the fact that *nepo-babies* themselves have lower well-being due to their awareness of their lack of competence (Calvard, 2012). A manager who is unsure of himself and his decisions will also manage the company poorly, which in turn will affect all processes within the company and the well-being of his subordinates (Qian, 2020). It can also be noted on the basis of research from this article and other literature on the subject that well-being in companies where *nepo-baby* occurs is disrupted at various levels. Another issue is that, at a general level, nepotism has a negative impact on organizational culture and hinders processes within the company (Akar, 2020).

Considering that employee wellbeing and job satisfaction are crucial for a company's development (Calvard, 2012), it is important to counteract the phenomenon of *nepo-baby* in company management structures. For this to happen, it is necessary to raise awareness of the problem and its negative consequences for the company. Without realizing how adversely it affects organizations and employee morale, it will not be possible to achieve transparency and strive for continuous development of the company. Practical strategies to counteract the phenomenon of *nepo-baby* may include the introduction of external performance appraisal systems, performance- and competency-based succession monitoring, and training in ethics and diversity in the workplace (Marciánová et al., 2025).

7. Summary

In summary, the occurrence of the *nepo-baby* phenomenon in managerial positions in organizations is associated with low levels of well-being and low levels of job satisfaction. The findings of this article are alarming and indicate a trend showing that the occurrence of *nepo-baby* significantly affects the company. There is little discussion of this phenomenon in management, which is why further exploration in this area is necessary. What is certain, however, is that the results of these studies show that *nepo-baby* in management is a topic worth researching, as it can be safely assumed that, apart from employee well-being and job satisfaction, it also affects other components, both at the individual and organizational level.

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